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CONNECTING WITH CUSTOMERS THROUGH CONNECTED SERVICES

Editorial Highlights

Ian White, Senior Vice President, Global Customer Services

June/July 2007

“Our goal is to create live connections between Sun and its customers,” says Ian White, Senior VP and global services champion at Sun. “It allows us to solve their problems much faster, which makes all of us more successful.” In a candid discussion that sets the stage for Sun Storage Services in FY’08, White shares his insights on the value of Connected Services.

Connections are everything

“Connected Services” refers to a forward-thinking service delivery model that eliminates barriers between service providers and customers. For Sun’s Global Customer Services business unit, Connected Services is our way of creating a live support connection with customers, so we can deliver our services quickly and cost-effectively, and make a real difference in our customers’ operations.

Connected Services from Sun can be minimal or extensive, ranging from basic remote monitoring and repair to full outsourcing through Sun Managed Services. Due to the strong advantages that Connected Services brings to our customers, it will be a key strategic focus for Sun Storage in FY’08.

SDP: Better communication worldwide

Our SDP, or service delivery platform, is what makes the concept of Connected Services possible. The SDP provides a direct connection to the customer’s storage environment, so we can see what’s going on, and diagnose and solve problems fast. The SDP also provides the basis for two-way communication in a Managed Services engagement, where Sun and its customers are collaborating as they co-manage the storage environment.

The SDP delivers the services of long-time technical support experts at Sun, and ties them into a global support network. Our ability to deliver services globally was enhanced with the acquisition of a Washington-based company a couple of years ago. That acquisition extended our support for heterogeneous environments, so we can cover all storage functions across a range of vendors. Globally, our support teams are based in North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific regions, and include first-class service delivery for virtually any storage device in any environment worldwide.

A win for customers

Our customers benefit from Connected Services on several levels. They get end-to-end support across multi-vendor, heterogeneous storage environments that feature a mix of operating systems, applications, and hardware. Sun can cover part or all of the storage environment, so customers get services at whatever level they choose.

And here’s a big benefit: the basic service is free. Buy hardware from Sun and we include remote monitoring, diagnostics, and fixes as part of our standard warranty or with an extended service contract. For customers that need more extensive services, our Managed Services are tailored to a customer’s budget and unique business pressures with a service level agreement (SLA). Managed Services are offered at competitive prices in one- or three-year contracts.

The results

We’ve learned that connected environments work a lot better than non-connected environments. We have data showing that the actual number of cases that need to be escalated are reduced in a connected environment. For those cases that do need to be escalated, approximately 40% can be resolved remotely, meaning there is no need for an on-site visit to the customer. Overall, cases are resolved approximately 50% faster in a connected environment, which is great news for our customers.

Barriers to overcome

Given those kind of results, it may seem surprising that some customers choose not to take advantage of Connected Services. The biggest reason is concerns about data security.

In terms of security, the concerns are especially prevalent in large financial institutions and telecommunications companies, which worry about legal exposure and compliance issues when outside vendors have connections into their data center. That's why we spend so much of our R&D budget on security measures for our storage solutions. We believe we have one of the most secure connections possible, and we're happy to meet with our customers to discuss the fact that there are no security issues with Connected Services.